

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**  
**South Pacific Division**

**Corporate Recruitment Image**

**A Framework for Enhancing Recruitment Results**

Prepared by:

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
San Francisco Service Center  
May 2001

## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary	3
Corporate Image for Business versus Recruitment	4
Current Perceptions Regarding ACE's Image	5
Considerations in Shaping Corporate Image	8
Recommendations for Enhancing ACE's Corporate Image	11
Conclusion	13
References and Bibliography	14

## **Executive Summary**

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management was tasked by the South Pacific Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assess its corporate image as it relates to recruitment and to offer suggestions that would have a positive impact on the Corps' ability to attract quality job applicants. This report, in conjunction with the "Recruitment Best Practices Report" that was also developed by OPM, will provide a full perspective on ways to enhance South Pacific Division's corporate recruitment image.

The corporate image for marketing products and services to potential customers and the corporate image used to attract potential employees evolve from one image but are targeted to different audiences and must be marketed differently. A corporate recruitment image needs to convey that SPD, as an employer, possesses attributes that make the Corps a great place to work.

Employee perceptions regarding the Corps as an employer are very positive. However, employees report that the external image of the Corps as an employer has faded over the years, due largely to decreased external hiring activities as well as a lack of time and resources. This lack of a public "persona" as an employer was further confirmed with informal surveys conducted with potential job seekers. Without a notable public persona, the job-seeking public must make an initial assessment of the organization based upon its name. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers name gives the perception that the Corps is a military organization and greatly understates the civil works side of the organization. To the job-seeking public as well as for current employees who work in the civil works arena, this dichotomy creates confusion about not only the Corps' mission but also its identity.

In shaping the corporate recruitment image, SPD needs to align and market its organizational offerings with its overall recruitment strategy and targeted recruitment populations. This report offers a general overview of the elements different targeted recruitment groups desire in an employer and a work environment. Understanding these different perspectives will aid in developing recruitment strategy and enhancing the positive characteristics which make up ACE's corporate recruitment image. Perspectives are offered from top performers, high value technical professionals, generation X job seekers, and organizations identified as "employers of choice".

A number of questions are posed to help SPD frame its corporate recruitment image. In addition, a host of suggestions are offered to enhance and market SPD's human resource image as an employer to the job-seeking public.

## **Corporate Recruitment Image**

### **A Framework for Enhancing Recruitment Results**

#### **Corporate Image for Business versus Recruitment**

Americans tend to be very conscious about image. The media makes billions helping companies promote their image in the consumer marketplace. When you make a decision to purchase a product, that decision is based to a large extent on the image you have of the company that produced it. Are they reliable in terms of quality? Is it something I want to be associated with? Do they treat their customers well? How close does their product come to meeting all of the features I am looking for? How will I be viewed by others if I buy this?

When it comes to the job marketplace, job seekers are looking for the same types of things consumers seek but from an employment standpoint. It's no secret that Americans tend to identify the image of "who they are" based upon their jobs. Therefore, the image of a company or organization as an employer becomes extremely important in capturing the job seekers' attention. An organization's public image – good, bad, neutral, or invisible – impacts the types of people whom will consider working for or doing business with the organization.

In marketing corporate image to the consumer, the focus is on the product and how purchasing it will positively impact your life. In marketing corporate image to the job seeker, the name recognition may draw them in but the marketing focus is not only on the product image of the organization but the culture of the organization. Pay and benefits only take an organization so far in the war for talent. A good fit between the job seeker and the culture of the organization will serve both parties well. While you need "fair pay" to attract applicants, it is the culture that reels them in and retains them. The culture largely defines how employees will be treated. How well do the culture and values of the organization match what the job seeker is looking for? Does the organization offer the attributes the job seeker wants? How is this employer better or different from others? How an employer is perceived in terms of its work environment and the employment opportunities it offers has a direct impact on the success of recruitment efforts.

Every corporation sends a message to the marketplace. This message, based on the competitive position the company stakes out for itself, emphasizes particular attributes such as "one-day-service." Or perhaps the message exploits a market niche: "specialists in estate state planning" or "software for architects." Maybe the message is less direct and aimed more at the customer's self-image: "the place I want to be at" or "you deserve better."

So how does the South Pacific Division (SPD) establish a message/image that makes it an employer of choice, the place I want to be at? The message, *this is the place I want to be at*, is voiced by Corps employees loud and clear. One theme that kept coming up during the new hire surveys was the pride and enthusiasm the employees had in the work they performed, and that no other employer could offer the diversity in the work that is being performed. This is an image SPD needs to instill in all its contacts made outside the Division, whether it through its web site, face-to-face or in written media.

SPD has two challenges in dealing with their corporate image. The first is defining who SPD is terms of an employer in the job marketplace. The second challenge is promoting this image in order to gain positive "name recognition" from the job- seeking public.

## Current Perceptions Regarding ACE's Image

It is evident through information obtained through internal SPD focus groups and surveys that SPD's presence outside its organization has diminished over the years. Contacts, whether they are at colleges/universities, professional organization, etc., have not been kept due to either lack of time, resources, money, or a lack of interest. SPD appears to be relying on web sites to fill this void. SPD and each of its District Offices have web sites that do not look the same nor convey the same message/image.

The following is a summary of the results of the SPD corporate image survey sent to 6 individuals within SPD; only 4 individuals responded.

1a. How do you think the Corps is perceived by the public?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Internationally excellent reputation</li><li>- Domestically, it varies—sees us as a regulatory agency primarily and a flood control agency secondary</li><li>- Agency heavily oriented to construction of major works</li><li>- Some environmentally unfriendly</li><li>- Unknown by the public at large</li><li>- Public is not aware of the full capabilities of the Corps</li><li>- Common misconceptions—too costly, too slow and unresponsive</li></ul>
1b. By potential applicants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pay is not comparable to the private sector</li><li>- View as a large organization with significant potential for employment on large engineering and construction project</li></ul>
2. What do you see as the keystones of the ACE corporate image?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Integrity, ability to get the job done, ability to handle many tasks and fairness</li><li>- We serve the Military...we are the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers</li><li>- Army values-loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage</li><li>- The refreshed Corps Vision, clearly states this</li></ul>
3. How does the image fit in the SPD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 2 responded that the image fit SPD</li><li>- 1 was not sure of what information we were looking for</li><li>- Excellent fit—see SPD Campaign Plan 2001</li></ul>

<p>4. What do you feel is missing or should be changed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need to gain positive visibility and recognition</li> <li>- Greater recognition of the professional standing of the organization—national change</li> <li>- Need comprehensive, coordinated, proactive public relations/communication plan that seeks opportunities to inform public of our mission to serve the Nation</li> </ul>
<p>5a. How do you want to be known by the public at large?</p> <p>5b. What does the organization value and stand for?</p> <p>5c. What do you do particularly well?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Want to be known as a “do organization, with the ability to fairly balance competing Interests</li> <li>- Again, refer to the Vision Statement</li> <li>- Army values-loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage</li> <li>- Respect, responsible, reliable.</li> <li>- We do many things well! We make waterways passable, reduce flooding, respond to disasters and emergencies, build and maintain military installations, preserve the environment, support federal-state-local governments, and provide research and development support for new solutions</li> </ul>

6a. What types of people do you want to attract as employees?	- Someone who wants to serve the public
6b. What do you offer them as an employer?	- Bright, creative, innovative, people that love public serve and the constituents they serve
6c. What makes you different/unique from other Employers?	- People interested in becoming managers, engineers, physical scientists
	- Responsibility at a lower grade, interesting work that is generally not found in the private sector and the ability to serve the public
	- Family like environment with much flexibility to pursue various careers; complex, challenging projects at an early stage of their career
	- You can't get rich working for the Corps, but we can offer jobs world wide, permanent and temporary; we can also train them to become the professional they desire to be
	- Lots of hands on early in their career
	- Multiple mission areas; variety of complex, challenging, satisfying civil and military projects around the world
	- Types of projects we do and the customers we serve
	- World-wide opportunities, variety of mission areas, professional, highly educated and dedicated workforce
7a. What type of corporate "presence" do you think the Corps has?	- The Corps has allowed its corporate presence to diminish over the last several years
7b. What should the Corps have?	- Trust, credibility, can do spirit
	- Dedicated, professional respected, high integrity
7c. What will be gained by doing it?	- Unsure of what is meant by corporate presence
	- Trust, credibility, can do spirit
	- Seek position of at least equal standing and recognition as a premier engineering organization within the engineering community by promoting its professional image, unique position, and capabilities
	- The Army and the nation will be the primary beneficiaries
	- A better professional image should help attract new employees
	- Continue to increase our value to the Army and the Nation

An informal survey given to 9 individuals (age 30 and younger) was conducted asking, “What kind of people do you think the Army Corps of Engineers employs?” The majority (6) of the responses was “soldiers.” After all, the title “Army Corps of Engineers” does imply a military workforce. Therefore, SPD needs to highlight its workforce as a predominantly civilian workforce. Nationwide the Corps employs **34,600 civilians** and 650 military women and men. What are SPD's statistics? This is an area that should be considered and highlighted in its corporate image, especially if the Corps wants to attract a younger civilian workforce that will be replacing the baby-boomers who are retiring in the foreseeable future.

## Considerations in Shaping Corporate Image

If the goal of refining the corporate image is to enhance recruitment, SPD should consider *corporate branding* in developing its corporate image to the public at large. Corporate branding is the practice of marketing the organization’s name, image, and benefits to potential recruits in a similar fashion as it would market its product service lines to potential customers.

### Corporate Branding

- □ Definition—The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company.
- □ Goal—To ensure that the organization manages, understands and values its employees with the care and coherence the marketing department would employ in the case of a valued customer.

Recruitment and Retention of High Value Technical Employee, April 1999

In considering how an organization wants to package itself for purposes of recruitment, it is important to understand what the target audience is seeking in an employer and in a work environment. The following information provides four different perspectives regarding work and work environment attributes: high value technical employees, top performers, generation X potential recruits, and characteristics of “employer of choice” organizations.

### *High Value Technical Employees*

According to a Fact Brief on Recruitment and Retention of High Value Technical Employees (engineers, IT staff, scientists, statistician and health professionals) published by the Corporate Leadership Council in April 1999, high value employees were asked to rank and “trade off” aspects of the employment offer. The 12 most valued factors and their utility scores are presented as follows:



EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCE OF HIGH VALUE EMPLOYEES <sup>1</sup>		
Employment Attribute	Category	Utility Score (Rank)
Manager Quality	Work Environment	5.02 (1)
Base Salary	Compensation & Benefits	4.58 (2)
External Equity	Compensation & Benefits	4.22 (3)
Health Benefits	Compensation & Benefits	4.02 (4-tie)
Business Travel	Work/Life Balance	4.02 (4-tie)
Retirement Contributions	Compensation & Benefits	3.84 (6)
Work Hours	Work/Life Balance	3.80 (7)
Company Reputation	Organizational Environment	3.64 (8)
Recognition	Work Environment	3.62 (9)
Internal Equity	Compensation & Benefits	3.59 (10)
Location	Work/Life Balance	3.55 (11)
Co-worker Quality	Work Environment	3.54 (12)
Child Care	Work/Life Balance	1.94 (30)

Corporate Leadership Council (April, 1999) p. 4

### *Top Performers*

Towers Perrin and National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) study listed desires of top performers (those individuals that have the potential to be the best-performing, most successful employees in an organization) today:

- ✧ Challenges
- ✧ Change on the job
- ✧ Opportunities for growth with the employer
- ✧ A rewards system (salary increases, bonuses) based upon performance
- ✧ Autonomy to complete work assignments

The most unattractive employment attributed for these top performers include:

- ✖ Rules
- ✖ Regulations
- ✖ Policy manuals
- ✖ Long meetings
- ✖ Job descriptions and duty statements

Note: The previous study was cited in Langan (2000, Winter).

### *Generation X*

Generation X (Gen X), according to Doverspike, Taylor, Shultz & McKay (2000) want:

- □ A more autonomous workplace
- □ Reward system that includes rapid raises and promotions for individual achievement (This generally contradicts with public sector service so alternative

job attributes need to be emphasized, i.e., Gen Xers tend to favor jobs where they can be seen as doing work having social value.)

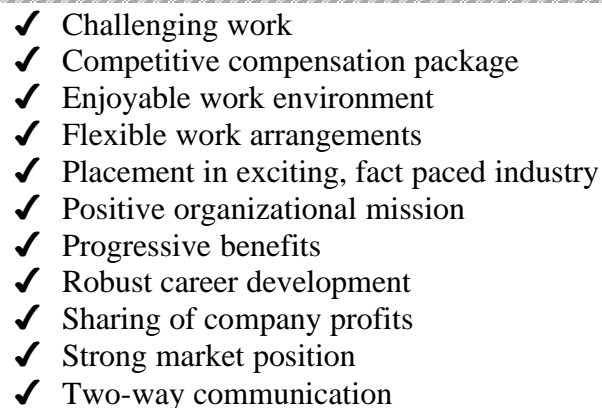
- □ To play hard and work hard. They don't want to have to devote themselves totally to the company so a recruitment strategy for this would be to emphasize the opportunity to balance work and leisure.
- Gen Xers are savvy in using the Internet as a medium of communication and online recruiting. Internet recruiting capabilities are essential for employers wanting to attract this target audience.
- Gen Xers have a mental model that a job seeker should be treated as a customer and the recruitment/selection process should be fast and responsive. To attract Gen Xers, organizations need to accelerate and simplify the hiring process.

More succinctly put, in order to increase recruitment of Gen Xers public agencies should:

- Emphasize the social values of public service
- Stress the existence of a climate where there can be a work-leisure balance and where employees are encouraged to have a life outside of work
- Make use of the Internet in recruiting
- Find methods of streamlining recruitment, selection, and hiring.

### *Employers of Choice*

Organizations perceived as *employers of choice* typically possess several, if not all, of the characteristics presented below:

- 
- ✓ Challenging work
  - ✓ Competitive compensation package
  - ✓ Enjoyable work environment
  - ✓ Flexible work arrangements
  - ✓ Placement in exciting, fast paced industry
  - ✓ Positive organizational mission
  - ✓ Progressive benefits
  - ✓ Robust career development
  - ✓ Sharing of company profits
  - ✓ Strong market position
  - ✓ Two-way communication

Corporate Leadership Council (April, 1999) p. 10

SPD has a number of the characteristics of what an employer of choice possesses. Other characteristics that also should be considered are:

Diversity of SPD's work  
Reward and recognition programs  
Travel throughout the world

## **Recommendations for Enhancing ACE's Corporate Image**

Corporate branding needs to be aligned with the organization's culture and should be integrated into all recruitment and retention strategies. In order for the image to be effective, a consistent message must be presented both within and outside of the organization.

### ***Image Content***

In shaping and/or defining the corporate brand, agreement needs to be reached on the following questions:

1. Why work at the Army Corps of Engineers?
2. What kinds of characteristics do Corps employees display?
3. What kind of relationship do we have with our employees?
4. What does it mean to work here?
5. What is the primary focus of our culture – customer service, innovation, operational excellence or spirit?
6. How can we make our culture real to potential employees?

After responding to these questions, review the employment qualities sought by the various targeted recruitment groups and determine your organizational strengths and limitations in appealing to these populations. Tailor your marketing strategies for each of these groups to highlight common ground and to honestly address the differences in a non-judgmental way.

### ***Marketing the Image***

The Corps has a very positive and marketable image to communicate. By promoting SPD's corporate image outside of the Corps, it will not only make it easier to attract and hire quality applicants, but it will also enhance pride of the organization with current employees and have a positive effect on retention rates.

Marketing the corporate image is a "24/7 endeavor" whether done consciously or unconsciously. The image of an organization can be gained in many ways.

- Official contact with the organization or one of its representatives;
- From recruiting materials, web sites or job advertisements;
- From conversations with current and former employees or friends, relatives, and professional associates of employees;
- From the "buzz" about the organization whether through news articles, press releases, event sponsorship, or community involvement;
- From the physical appearance of the work environment; and
- Through overhearing conversations of employees.

The Corps needs to develop a marketing strategy with measurable goals and objectives. Building your corporate identity and presence can be a win-win experience for all parties

involved. While a PR firm certainly might be desirable, a lot can be accomplished with a minimal financial investment on the part of the Corps.

1. The image presented at all recruiting events needs to be consistent, regardless of career field, skill level of recruits, or office conducting the recruiting.
2. All web sites must be recruitment oriented and portray the same image, have the same general “feel” and have employment pages designed in a similar fashion. Unique local attributes can be supplemented at local sites but should be kept to a minimum.
3. Recruiting materials should include a benefits overview that ties in to the image (i.e., not only standard Federal benefits but benefits based upon employment with the Corps).
4. Script the way all applicants should be treated when interacting with the organization. They should be treated as well as your best customers.
5. SPD recruiters, managers and employees should establish on going relationships with colleagues outside the organization/agency, colleges/universities, community organizations, and related occupational organizations. Employees should not only be encouraged to participate in outside activities but should also be encouraged to assume leadership roles in these activities.
6. Encourage all members of the organization to actively promote the Corps and aggressively recruit quality applicants to become members of the team. Provide training, incentives, and positive reinforcement to make it a reality.
7. Encourage employees to publish in trade magazines and professional journals. Management should aggressively seek recognition of Corps’ accomplishments in these publications.

The following suggestions for building a positive corporate image are adapted from Competing for Talent: Key Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Becoming an Employer of Choice (Ahlrichs, 2000).

8. Give employees ACE shirts to wear when they do volunteer work or participate as a group in social events like a fun run. Make certain college students have Corps logo items when they return to school.
9. Feature volunteers in Corps’ newsletters to build pride in community involvement.
10. Sponsor a highway, river or other outdoor feature. Involving employees in the project builds teamwork.
11. Recognize “super volunteers” with special in-house recognition.
12. Feature “super volunteers” and their activities in promotional advertisements about the Corps, on your web site, and in marketing materials.
13. Encourage employees to make public presentations at community groups, user groups, church organizations, etc. When the employee is introduced, the Corps will be also.

- 14.** Encourage senior management and others in the Corps to assume leadership position in community and non-profit organizations.
- 15.** Make your conference rooms available for professional and civic organizations to meet either during or after hours if at all possible.
- 16.** Team with other organizations to sponsor a community event.
- 17.** Look for employees to showcase in the local media. Pitch to the local media about employees with unusual hobbies or considerable community involvement, retiring employees, or those with unusual success stories.
- 18.** Compete as an organization for awards and recognition, i.e., professional excellence awards, community service awards, Combined Federal Campaign, etc.

## **Conclusion**

Developing and marketing a corporate recruitment image is not a quick or easy task. The recruitment image portrayed must be in alignment with the product image and the corporate culture. The ability to fully make this alignment is a noted strength of employers of choice. To accomplish this requires commitment and effort throughout all levels in the organization. To use a cliché, SPD needs to talk the same talk and walk the same walk to achieve the outcomes it requires.

## REFERENCES

Ahlich, N.S. (2000). *Competing for talent: Key recruitment and retention strategies for becoming an employer of choice*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

Corporate Leadership Council. (1999, April). *Recruitment and retention of high value technical employees*. Catalog No.: 070-222-924. Washington DC: Corporate Executive Board.

Doverspike, D., Taylor, M.A., Shultz, K.S. & McKay, P.F. (2000, Winter). Responding to the challenge of a changing workforce: Recruiting nontraditional demographic groups. *Public Personnel Management*, 29 (4), 445-457.

Langan, S. (2000, Winter). Finding the needle in the haystack: The challenge of recruiting and retaining sharp employees. *Public Personnel Management*, 29 (4), 461-4.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Harris, J. & Brannick, J. (1999). *Finding and keeping great employees*. New York: AMA Publications